

VZCZCXRO6798
PP RUEHAG RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHLH RUEHPW RUEHROV
DE RUEHAH #0032/01 0081136
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 081136Z JAN 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0015
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3208
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1023
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0897
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1471
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2079
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000032

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN
AID/W FOR EE/AA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/07/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: BUREAUCRATIC INTRIGUE IN THE
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Classified By: CHARGE RICHARD E. HOAGLAND FOR REASONS, 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: A little digging behind the "technical problem" explanation for the postponement of a visit revealed bureaucratic maneuvering within Turkmenistan's Ministry of Health. A deputy minister stepped in it by extending an invitation that had not been cleared by his boss. Now, colleagues, at least one with a long-standing grudge, is using this against him, while the deputy minister tries to correct the problem without getting caught. Despite the opacity of the inner workings of Turkmenistan's government, this case illuminates that bureaucrats are interested in what makes them look good and keeps their rivals off balance, while protecting their own flanks. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) In response to a September 11, 2007, request for assistance in designing a new infectious disease lab by Deputy Minister of Health and Medical Industry (MOHMI) Elyasov, USAID helped to organize a visit by a joint U.S.-Canadian team of specialists from U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, the Canadian global Partnership (CGP), and the U.S. Centers for disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The delegation was supposed to discuss laboratory design plans, visit several public health labs, and meet with scientists to assess the level of safety and security and determine what assistance could be provided by either the U.S. agencies or CGP.

13. (C) The team planned to visit Turkmenistan January 23-26, but USAID was advised unofficially on December 28 by MOHMI and on January 2 officially by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the proposed dates were "not timely" due to "technical problems" with the plans to construct the laboratory. MFA stressed that the visit was not canceled, only postponed.

14. (C) The real reason for the delay appears to be primarily personal/bureaucratic within MOHMI. According to a source at

the Ministry, Deputy Minister Elyasov did not inform the Minister before sending his initial request to us last fall, a major faux pas in this top-down bureaucratic culture. Since we requested a meeting for the delegation with the Minister, a MOHMI colleague with knowledge of this fact made clear to Elyasov that Minister Serdarov would learn of his previous "insubordinate actions" if a meeting were granted. Consequently, Elyasov now wants to postpone the visit to give time to the Minister to take ownership of the plan. We told MOHMI that an soon-to-arrive CODEL would most likely raise this issue during its visit, and now Elyasov has become even more panicked. Basically, a colleague of Elyasov's at MOHMI does not want the team to visit the labs, which he views as substandard, and is using the entire situation (including sending the original request without permission) against Elyasov.

15. (C) The government has yet to award the tender for construction of the lab, because, according to MOHMI and MFA sources, the Turkish construction firm Polimeks, the leading bidder, could not meet the design specs with the allocated funding. Another MOHMI source told us that Deputy Minister Orazov (responsible for Sanitary/Epidemiological Services (SES)), who stands to lose bureaucratically from the new consolidated lab, is also trying to sabotage Elyasov by not providing his technical inputs to the design. If the available funding does not allow for the new lab to meet SES' specs, Orazov could step in and shut the lab down to embarrass Elyasov.

16. (C) COMMENT: Behind the opaque screen that covers government workings and decision-making in Turkmenistan are

ASHGABAT 00000032 002 OF 002

apparently the same bureaucratic machinations one finds everywhere. Clearly in this case, bureaucrats are interested in what makes them look good and keeps their rivals off balance, while protecting their own flanks. It will certainly make us wonder what intra- and inter-agency issues are at play the next time we get the "technical problem" explanation for something from our Turkmen government counterparts. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND